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**Ribbon cutting planned for universally accessible playground at Kensington Metropark**

*Maple Beach playground is first universally accessible play space within the Metroparks system*

[Milford, Mich.] – The Huron-Clinton Metroparks will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, June 10 to officially open its new, universally accessible Maple Beach playground. Located in Kensington Metropark, the accessible playground is the first of its kind within the Metroparks’ 13-park system. Design elements at Maple Beach ensure children and adults of all ages and abilities have access to a play area that incorporates universal accessibility design principles. Maple Beach is now one of only a few such playgrounds within the region.

Key features of the Maple Beach playground and park space now include:

* Solid, rubber safety surfacing
* Wheelchair accessible ramps into the playscape
* Sensory-friendly equipment
* Shade structures
* Transfer-stations onto the playscape
* Spaces for quiet independent play
* Dignity landings on slides
* A unique We Go Round where both visitors who use, and who don’t use, wheelchairs can play
* Improved pathways to the beach
* New restrooms, and more.

Metroparks Director Amy McMillan said, “Metroparks remains focused on collaborating with community partners in thoughtful ways intended to ensure visitors to the Metroparks can wholly enjoy recreational activities regardless of ability. What we’ve done at Maple Beach playground is one of many actionable steps the Metroparks is focused on in our efforts to remove barriers and enhance accessibility at our parks.”

Playground design elements were based on the invaluable perspective of multiple organizations and individuals including the Fun, Accessible, Inclusive Recreation (FAIR) Play Coalition. The FAIR Play Coalition is an advisory group for this project comprised of organizations and individuals that have expertise in working with those with disabilities or who have disabilities themselves. Funding for the project came from the Metroparks budget, but supplemental funding was also provided by partners including Margaret Dunning Foundation and a Giving Tuesday campaign for the project in 2019 where Genisys Credit Union matched funds raised.

The playground equipment was installed in 2020 and incorporates play zones that are purposely mindful of sensory perceptions and physical disabilities.  The playground and surrounding area were completed in Spring of 2021 with the rubber safety surfacing being the final step in completing the project.

“Huron-Clinton Metroparks went above and beyond in their vision and execution of Maple Beach’s renovation. By assuring the renovations and new playground would meet the needs of most every visitor they included valuable voices and insight from the disability community.” Says FAIR Play Coalition member and mother of children with disabilities, Casey Somerville. “The recognition and thoughtful consideration was not lost on me as a disability mom and I truly believe they understand that, inclusion gives to everyone and takes from no one. Navigating the world of play while raising children with varied disabilities has posed unique challenges, and the depth of work to acknowledge and grow takes great time and attention. I’m grateful to have contributed alongside such a large park organization and committee willing to do that valuable work. Everyone deserves to play and play they will!”

Pathways leading to the play space and beach area incorporate accessibility elements aimed at ensuring adults, parents and grandparents with limitations or disabilities can get up close and actively participate in park activities.

Anne Richardson from The ARC Livingston County explains, “I am hopeful that other parks and playground spaces will be inspired by the inclusivity of this mindfully created space at Maple Beach, where children and adults of all abilities can truly play together and make wonderful memories.  One only has to visit this beautiful playground and see how it is being used to witness the fact that we are all better together.”

“On behalf of the Huron-Clinton Metroparks team, I want to express my deep appreciation for the insight our advisory partners provided. Their involvement throughout the many phases of the playground project had a tremendous influence on the overall design and will be appreciated for years to come,” added McMillan.

The official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Maple Beach playground will take place at 11 a.m. on Thursday, June 10. The public is invited to join in the fun and test the playground out for themselves. Metroparks will be waiving park admission at Kensington Metropark until noon that day to allow visitors the opportunity to be a part of the event for free. To learn more, view site renderings and stay up to date with project developments, visit [www.metroparks.com/projects#4](http://www.metroparks.com/projects#4).

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 **About Huron-Clinton Metroparks**One of America’s premier metropolitan park systems, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks have served the people of Southeast Michigan since 1940. Managed by the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, the Metroparks are made up of 13 properties in Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. Available activities include fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, nature study, biking, golf, winter sports and more. The Metroparks also provide educational resources on science, nature, history and the environment. Learn more at Metroparks.com.